

# Ayurvedic Perspective of Hypothyroidism w. s. r to Dhatawagnimandya: A Conceptual Study

Nikita Gupta<sup>1</sup>, Lajwanti Keswani<sup>2</sup>, Atal Singh Kushwaha<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Samhita Siddhanta, PT. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Auto. College and Hospital, Bhopal

<sup>2</sup>Reader, Department of Samhita Siddhanta, PT. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Auto. College and Hospital, Bhopal

<sup>3</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Samhita Siddhanta, PT. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Auto. College and Hospital, Bhopal

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author Email id–nikitagpt32[at]gmail.com

**Abstract:** *The fast growing lifestyle and work culture has made human life sedentary and technology dependent, which in turns makes human lazy and physically inactive. This sedentary and stressful lifestyle has led to various metabolic diseases i. e. lifestyle disorders such as Hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus etc. It's been observed that students and new generation of Ayurveda are facing difficulties in managing and understanding these diseases by Ayurveda perspective, as these diseases are not mentioned as by their names. Hypothyroidism is also one of them which is more prevalent now a days. Hence to give it an Ayurveda background in relation to its physio-pathology understanding this paper will help in this regard.*

**Keywords:** Hypothyroidism, jatharagni, bhutagni, dhatwagni, dhatawagnimandya, kapha dosha, Ayurveda, med dhatu, dhatu dushti, ras dhatu, hyp metabolism

## 1. Introduction

In this era of growth and development where the world is experiencing an exponential boom in both science and technology, at the same time human's way of unhealthy living has led to enduring various lifestyle disorders. Hormonal disorders being one of the most prevalent diseases of today's era is becoming a significant public health issue. According to various studies done in this field approximately 42 million people suffer from various thyroid disorders. The prevalence of Hypothyroidism is very high as it observed that one among 10 people suffer from hypothyroidism in India. Thyroid disorders is not only a burden on Indian health system but it is also becoming a serious health issue worldwide

Ayurveda being the most ancient and scientific system of healthcare expounded various measures that will be helpful in dealing with such kind of lifestyle related health issues. As this modern age disease is a result of various lifestyle changes this can be corrected when we bring back the lost holistic approach of living. In the terms of modern system of medicine hypothyroidism is caused due to insufficiency and imbalance of T3, T4, TSH hormones, and one who suffers from thyroid disorders needs to be on hormonal therapy for lifelong, but no significant relief from symptoms can be seen even taking medicine along with that hormonal therapy comes along with some unavoidable side effects. So there is a great need to find out a better and safer treatment from the hidden treasure of Ayurveda treatise to deal with various hormonal disorders.

As there is no direct correlation of hypothyroidism with any disease in ayurveda, still we can manage the disease on the the symptoms and ruling out the dosha and the cause involved. As Acharya charak expounded physician should never be ashamed if he can't name that disease, rather he

should focus on the underlying *hetus*, *lakshanas* and treat accordingly by planning *aushadh* In accordance with the *hetus* and *lakshanas*. . When we go inside the pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism we perceive that it's a metabolic disorder and we can compare it with the vitiation of *agni* according to Ayurveda classics. As *acharya* expounds that for all the metabolic activities happening in the body is due to proper functioning of *agni* and any vitiation in its functioning will lead to various diseases.

## 2. Review Literature

*Acharya charak* in *vatkalakaliyaadhyay* of *sutrasthan* reflected *agni* in concept of *pitta*. From the point of view of Ayurveda, *pitta* has been described as *agni* (fire) <sup>1</sup>, since it performs fire-like actions i. e. *paka*, which refers to *pacana* (digestion); *dahana* (burning, combustion or oxidation) including *bhinna-samghata* (splitting); *tapana* (heat production), *parinama* (conversion), *parāvrtti* (transformation), *prakāśana* (illumination), *ranjana* or *varnakara* (colouration) and *prabhakara* (to cause lustre) <sup>2</sup>.

A careful study of the existing editions of ancient Ayurvedic classics and allied literature shows that *pitta* performs functions similar to those of *agni*<sup>3</sup>. The concept of *agni* of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to *pitta* is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for *aharapacana* in the *koṣṭha* (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of *sarabhaga* (nutrient fraction) of the *ahāra* (food) from the *kiṭṭabhaga* (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events energy, synthesis and maintenance metabolism. In addition, it is seen to comprehend photo and chemo synthetic processes. *Pacakapitta* known variously as *jātharagni*, *koṣṭhāgni*, *antaragni*, *pacakāgni* and *dehāgni* etc.; while being located in its own place in an area between *amāśaya* and *pakvāśaya*,

directly participates in the digestion of food and at the same time, lends support to and augments the functions of the remaining *pittas*, present elsewhere in the body<sup>4</sup>. The reference here, obviously relates to the remaining *pittas* viz., *ranjaka*, *sadhaka*, *alocaka* and *bhrajaka*. It is held that the *pacakapitta* contributes moieties of it to the seven *dhatvagnis*, and supports and augments the function of the latter<sup>5</sup>.

It would be seen from the foregoing that the *Ayurvedic* concept of *agni* includes, not only five kinds of *pittas* but also. The *dhatvagnis* and *bhutagnis*. It is clear from the classical *Ayurvedic* texts that the enumeration of the number of *agni's* (which include *pitta*) varies from author to author. According to *Caraka Samhita*, read together with its main commentary by *Cakrapāṇi Datta*, the number of *agnis* enumerated are over 13 as shown below *jatharagni* 1, *bhutagni* 5, *dhatvagni*<sup>6</sup>.

2 On the other hand, *Suśruta* is seen to have described only five *agnis* viz. *Pacakāgni*, *ranjakāgni*, *alocakāgni*, *sadhakāgni* and *bhrajakāgni*<sup>7</sup>. There is however an indirect reference in *Suśruta Samhita* to five *bhūtāgnis*, in the brief description made to the transformation, which foodstuffs undergo in the organism. When these five *agnis* are taken into consideration, the total number of *agnis* according to *Suśruta* would be ten. *Vāgbhata* is seen to have reckoned

5 *pittas*  
5 *bhutagni*  
7 *dhatvagni*  
3 *doṣāgni*  
3 *mal agni*  
in all twenty three *agnis*.

Of the more recent authorities, *Sarngadhara* is seen to have recognized five *pittas* only. On the other hand, *Bhava Miśra* is seen to have followed *Charaka and Vāgbhata*.

### Pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism according to *Ayurveda*

*Acharya vagbhat* in *ashtanghridya* cited

स्वस्थानस्थस्य कायामेरंशाः धातुषु संस्थिताः।  
तेषां सादातिदीप्तिभ्यां धातुवृद्धिक्षयोद्भवः॥

"Moiety of *kāyāgni*, which is located in its own place are distributed to and permeate through all the *dhatu's*; a decrease of it makes for an increase of the *dhatu's*, while an increase of it makes for the decrease of the *dhātus*<sup>8</sup>."

The seven kinds of *dhatvagnis* obviously refer to substances which like enzymes catalyse the synthesis of seven kinds of nutrient substances, required for the use of the seven species of *dhatu's* each *agni*, aiding the conversion of nutrient substances into what may permissibly be called "precursor substances" of the formed *dhatu's*, already present in the body. This view is based upon references to *poshaka* or *asthayidhatu's* and *poshya* or *sthayidhatu's*, found mentioned in *Cakrapani's* commentary on *Charakasamhita*<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the *rasagni* would catalyse the conversion of appropriate substances and their incorporation into the *rasādīdhātu's* which latter serves as the vehicle of transport of the remaining *poshaka* or *asthayidhatu's*. Similarly, catalysed

materials obtained from *ahara rasa* are made available to corresponding *sthayi* or *poshyadhatus*. It obvious that the term *dhatvagni* is a collective noun standing both for group specific and reaction specific enzymes. Even so, metabolic reactions envisaged above are not exclusively anabolic but this also comprise catabolic reactions, which yield waste products or *kitta* in the process. This view is implicit in the *kiṭṭapaka* referred to by *Cakrapāṇi Datta*<sup>10</sup>. The outcome of *kiṭṭapāka*, are discharged from the body at periodical intervals and the remaining parts are utilized for the production of a number of structures of the body, such as hair, nail etc

The idea underlying the classical description of the behaviour of the *pacakāṁśas* in the *dhatu's*, in the two circumstances stated above, can be illustrated with the example of the conditions described as *atyagni* known also as *bhasmaka*, and *mandagni* corresponding in modern parlance to hyper and hypo-metabolism respectively.

The hypometabolism (hypothyroidism) corresponding to *mandagni* can be illustrated with low thyroxin availability-thyroxin activates cellular oxidative processes throughout the body and an insufficiency of this hormone has been shown to be followed by a reduction in the oxidative reaction, the B. M. R. may fall to 25%. The other related symptoms of the condition are the development of myxedema which is characterised by a reduction of mental and bodily vigour, the loss of sex drive, loss of hair and an abnormal thickening of the skin as if much water has been accumulated in it (oedema); it leads to an increase of body weight, since less food is burnt in the cells and much of it is stored as fat.

### Symptoms of Hypothyroidism according to *Ayurveda*

If we talk about symptomology of Hypothyroidism it is not mentioned exact by name in *Ayurveda* classics. As *ayurveda* deals with pathogenesis rather than naming any disease, hence by seeing the above pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism it involves main incident of *dhatwagni Mandya* and due to which the prominent *dhatudusti* occurs mainly of *rasdhatu* and *meddhatu*. Shedding light on symptoms, we also perceive that along with the vitiation of *rasdhatu* and *med dhatu*, elevated *kaphadoshais* seen along with vitiated *pitta* and *vaatdosha*.

The clinical features of Hypothyroidism are fatigue, lethargy, cold intolerance, constipation, dry and coarse skin, puffy face, hair fall, depression, weight gain, irregular menstruation, infertility etc.

These clinical manifestations can be seen in correspondence to the disease caused due to vitiated *rasa dhatu*, symptoms such as *ashraddha*, *aruchi*, *gaurava*, *angmarda*, *pandu*, *klaibya*, *angsaad* and *acharyacharakin grahaniadhyay* of *charakchikitsa* cited that the former *dhatu* is essential for the formation of latter *dhatu*, and any vitiation in the former results in the abnormalities of latter *dhatu*.

The disease caused due to *med dhatudusti* can also be seen in symptoms of hypothyroidism such *shaithilya*, weakness, weight gain and some features of *sukradusti* such *asklaibya*, *nachaasyajayategarbha* that means unable to conceive,

some symptoms can be seen in correspondence to *doshadusti* such as weight gain, laxity of muscles, puffiness, constipation, cold intolerance, minimal sweating, hairfall can be observed in correspondence to *doshadusti* involved.

### 3. Discussion

*Ayurveda* defines a healthy state of body as

स्वस्थानस्थस्य कायामेरंशाः धातुषु संस्थिताः।  
तेषां सादातिदीप्तिभ्यां धातुवृद्धिक्षयोद्भवः॥

Here *acharya* expounded about both physical as well as mental health and states that, One who is established in Self, who has balanced *doshas* (primary life force), balanced *agni* (fire of digestion), properly formed *dhatu*s (tissues), proper elimination of *malas* (waste products), well-functioning bodily processes, and whose mind, soul and senses are full of bliss is called a healthy person.

*Ayurveda* believes that the imbalance in digestive fire (*Agni*) is the root cause for most of the diseases. *Ayurvedic* experts analyse *Agni* not only as digestive fire, but energy behind all the metabolic processes of the body. This also refers to physical well-being.

As discussed earlier, due to unhealthy food habits and lifestyle, *jatharagni* gets vitiated which ultimately vitiates the *dhatwagni*. This vitiated *agni* will result in abnormal formation of the seven *dhatu*s, firstly they will not be formed properly and if formed will be present in abnormal state. This hypo metabolism of *agni* being the main culprit will elevate *kaphadosha* along with *vata* and *pitta* and ultimately causes abnormalities in its functioning and lead to *rasdhatudusti* and *med dhatudushti*.

### 4. Conclusion

Hypothyroidism is a condition caused due to de escalated metabolism and when we see metabolic functioning in *Ayurveda* view point, we correlate it to the functioning of *agni*. And on the basis of pathogenesis and symptomology mentioned earlier one can easily correlate it with *dhatawagnimandya*. In the same way treating according to *hetus*, *doshas*, *lakshanas*, *dhatudushti* rather than by naming any disease is the ideal way of management, as *charaka* quoted very clearly that the whole mechanism of *Ayurveda* revolves around the *tri sutra* i. e. *hetu*, *lakshan* and *aushadh*. Hence it can be concluded that today's hypothyroidism is nothing but vitiation of *dhatwagni* due to sedentary and disturbed lifestyle of people and in this way this paper will help in gaining the *Ayurveda* perspective of hypothyroidism in relation to its physio-pathology.

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